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## ***Davis announces \$600,000 in grants to boost Indiana's tourism industry***

INDIANAPOLIS - Lt. Gov. Kathy Davis today announced \$600,000 in grants to support the research and development of new tourism products around the state.

The funds are available through the Lt. Governor's Quality of Place initiative, and will fund 11 new tourism projects.

"Tourism plays a significant role in Hoosier communities and the state's economy," said Davis, who leads the Indiana Department of Commerce. "As we raise the profile of Indiana as a travel destination, we must help communities make needed improvements and additions that contribute to their quality of life."

The City of Evansville will receive a \$40,500 grant to conduct a feasibility study to build the Evansville Municipal Dock.

"With the study, we'll look at how to best recapture the connection between our downtown and the Ohio River through the docking facility," said Evansville mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel. "This is an important step in recognizing the importance of the River in tourist attraction and extending the Pigeon Creek Greenway beyond the banks of the Ohio."

The Starlight Visitors Association, in coordination with the Indiana Uplands Grape-Growers Cooperative, was awarded a \$20,000 grant to fund a business and marketing plan that will create, implement, market and sustain a wine trail.

"Destinations across the Midwest recognize that agri-tourism is a viable industry, and this funding will allow southern Indiana grape growers to capitalize on our niche market," said Dana Huber member of the Indiana Tourism Council and partner in the Grape-Growers Cooperative.

The Quality of Place grant awards will help fund the following tourism-related projects:

- **Evansville Municipal Dock**, was awarded \$40,500. Evansville will utilize the \$40,500 grant to conduct a feasibility study to build the Evansville Municipal Dock. The dock will enable large touring riverboats such as the Delta Queen and the Mississippi Queen to moor in Evansville. This would encourage thousands of visitors and visitation to Historic Downtown Evansville creating foot traffic to other attractions along Evansville's "Main Street." The dock could also serve as the permanent home of a LST (Landing Ship Tank), the WWII ship built in Evansville.
- **Ohio River Scenic Route of Southern Indiana, Inc.**, Evansville, was awarded \$48,750. The "Hoosier Crafted" program would focus the \$48,750 grant on artisans who preserve traditional Hoosier skills by creating a brand and marketing it. Products might include, but are not limited to: pottery, textiles, furniture, wine and cheese. The "Hoosier Crafted" program calls for conducting a feasibility study that would evaluate the product, develop a "Hoosier Crafted" brand identity, examine existing and potential market channels and look at additional partners. This program will create special trails that feature artisans at work in their studios or galleries, and retail outlets displaying their works. The "Hoosier Crafted" project will encompass the 13 counties along the Ohio River Scenic Byway, a national scenic byway and the eight counties that border it.
- **I-69 Cultural Corridor/Gateways**, Muncie, was awarded \$32,250. This project will optimize the impact of this major transportation artery by developing the corridor into one cohesive tourism product. This project is a joint effort of several counties stretching from Steuben County in the north to Marion County in the south. A coordinated event along the corridor could grow to bring literally hundreds of thousands of visitors into towns and businesses up and down the route. The initiative will tie together the cultural assets of communities along the interstate, and brand the entire corridor as one large showcase.
- **Indiana Avenue/Revitalization Plan**, Indianapolis, was awarded \$63,750. The Indiana Avenue Cultural District located in downtown Indianapolis will use this grant to determine the feasibility of remodeling existing attractions and making additions like a Jazz Walk of Fame, a soul food restaurant, live music programming and permanent outdoor staging. As the original center of African American commerce and with its roots in early Jazz and Blues, Indiana Avenue has a rich heritage and collection of landmark commercial and residential sites, as well as some current day experiences through festivals, events, theatrical and museum programming.
- **Indiana Limestone Heritage Parks/Interpretive Center**, Bloomington was awarded \$41,898. The Indiana Limestone Heritage Parks will add a distinctive product, which is unique not only to Indiana but the United States as a whole. It will draw international, as well as local, state and national visitors. The park will showcase the unique landscape of the Indiana limestone region, and it's impact on the nation and the world.

- **Indiana National Road Association/Interpretive Signage**, Cambridge City, was awarded \$62,250. The Historic National Road is a six-state, All-American Road, one of only 19 such byways designated through the National Scenic Byways program. This grant will provide the means necessary for the Indiana National Road Association to hire a consultant to research, design, and plan for the implementation of the association's 2003 Transportation Enhancement grant for interpretive panels along the route, and an audio tour of the Historic National Road. This project will promote unique sites along the byway, and encourage continued preservation of those and related sites across Indiana, and the other five states the Historic National Road traverses.
- **Indianapolis City Market Corp./Business Plan**, Indianapolis, was awarded \$25,000. The City Market Reinvention Comprehensive Destination Business Plan will provide the business blueprint for transforming the historic marketplace into a visitor destination. The City Market is known for presenting food and food experiences in creative and engaging ways that reflect the character and authenticity of Indiana. The Market seeks to develop new components, including a culinary arts institute, a full-time farmers' cooperative, Indiana agriculture showcase, and a shared-use commercial kitchen.
- **Indiana Underground Railroad Coalition/Interpretive Centers**, Madison, was awarded \$89,600. This project will create welcome centers by using existing attractions, exhibits detailing the history of a specific area, and other Indiana tourism sites to link counties together and tell their history. Several communities in south central, southern, and eastern Indiana have formed a network determined to share the rich history of Indiana's Underground Railroad movement to residents and visitors alike. This region is being targeted, because it is the most documented Underground Railroad area of its kind in Indiana.
- **National Road Heritage Trail/Planning**, Indianapolis, was awarded \$75,000. The 150-mile National Road Heritage Trail will draw tourists to explore large portions of the National Road Corridor by bicycle, on horseback and on foot, and will enhance the local experience for those who travel by automobile. It will also be the backbone of a statewide greenways network with its own tourism benefits.
- **Starlight Visitors Association/Indiana Uplands Tour**, Borden, was awarded \$20,000. This association was formed by a group of southern Indiana wineries in coordination with the Indiana Uplands Grape-Growers Cooperative, and will use the grant to fund a business and marketing plan to create, implement, market, and sustain a wine trail. The Wine Trail will serve as a major midwestern agri-tourism attraction that will create a larger market for Indiana's beautiful upland areas of the Hoosier National Forest, and will link the natural beauty and agri-tourism of the state with one another in a compelling visitor package.

- **Wayne County Foundation/Music Walk of Fame**, Richmond, was awarded \$71,250. This grant will help fund the Starr-Gennett Interpretive Center with permanent and temporary exhibit galleries, collections, storage, and public program space and research area. The Indiana Music Walk of Fame will foster collaboration between Indiana music heritage organizations, and highlight the continuous contributions Indiana has made to music history.

Qualifying proposals for these grants were reviewed and rated by a grant committee. Applicants were required to provide 25 percent of the funding for these projects.

Anyone interested in learning more about these or other Commerce programs should contact their regional Commerce office at 800.463.8081, or visit the Web site at [www.indianacommerce.com](http://www.indianacommerce.com).

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